

# Classics of Modern Social Theory

Soc 170/270

School of Education 206

Mon/Wed 3:00pm-4:20pm

The course explores the modern social world and current economic, political and social debates. Students will use the foundations of social theory to analyze, discuss, and write well-reasoned arguments addressing large societal changes happening today. Essentially, students will learn to think like sociologists. Topics may include: the problem of social order and the nature of social conflict; capitalism and bureaucracy; the relationship between social structure and politics; the social sources of religion and political ideology; and the evolution of modern societies.

*(Limited enrollment. Preference to sociology majors. Graduate students, register for 270)*

Bet Red Bird

Office Hours: By Appointment

TA: [REDACTED]

Office Hours: Tue 3:00-5:00pm

BRedBird@stanford.edu

McClatchy, 210A

[REDACTED]

McClatchy, 210

## My Co-Worker

Mitaka Ki (Mita for short), is a certified and licensed medical alert dog. She is trained to detect and alert to subtle changes in blood chemistry. She accompanies me everywhere, but when we are out she is frequently working, so please do not be offended if she doesn't visit you. If you would like to have Mita kept away from you, please let me know. Also, we all get distracted once in a while. Mita is just a dog, I hope you will forgive her if she periodically gets distracted or forgets what she is doing.

## Assignments

Class Attendance and Participation	30pts
Topic Discussions	30pts
Op-Ed Writing Assignments	30pts
Take-Home Final	10pts

## Readings and Class Lectures

Show up, be on time, participate.

Lectures will be recorded. If you miss a day you may make up the lost points by watching the missed lecture and writing a paper that answers a specific question. Missed lectures, as well as course readings, are posted on CourseWork.

Readings may be found on the course website. In the course schedule they are listed the day they are due.

## Topic Discussions

More important than learning the theories is seeing how these theories translate into a sociological understanding the world. Thus, students will choose one of three topic areas. Readings will focus on your topic area. Once you commit, you cannot change. The goal is to read about current events and explain them using the theories discussed in class. Your topic group will be responsible for educating your peers on how the theories we cover in class relate to your topic's weekly assignment. You can do this however you want: lecture, group discussion, etc. You may take turns or do it all together, but you will be graded as a group either way. Each group will get 20-25 minutes each. You may choose from the following topics:

- Great Recession and the Middle Class
- Race, Ethnicity and Citizenship
- American Politics, Political Opinion, and the 2016 Presidential Election

## Op-Ed Writing Assignments

Each student will write three Opinion-Editorial pieces of 500-1000 words. Each should state an opinion and support that opinion using well-reasoned logic and material presented in the class. Specifically:

- State a current issue;
- Provide your opinion on the issue;
- Support your argument using well-reasoned outside facts ;
- Use concrete examples; and,
- The conclusion should demonstrate your grasp of materials presented in class.

In addition, your piece should be well-written, concise, interesting, and grammatically sound.

Some notes on writing a good op-ed: The issue you write on should be timely and thought-provoking. I also look for ingenuity, strength of argument, freshness of opinion, clear writing, and newsworthiness. Personal experiences and first-person narrative can be great, particularly when offered in service of a larger idea. So is humor, when it is funny and topical. Eschew . . . um, I mean . . . stay away from Olympian language and bureaucratic jargon (infrastructure, inputs, outlays). Write the article in a way you would like to read it. Make one argument (and only one) thoroughly, point by point; the more detail the better. If you try to do too much, you can wind up with an article that, in striving to say everything, ends up saying nothing. Do not be afraid to stick your neck out. Remember it is difficult but possible to express complex ideas in clear, concise prose (I will never provide page minimums). Above all, put yourself in your readers' shoes. Learn from comments and feedback, but you do not have to accept all of them.

Students will lead a discussion about their favorite op-ed during the final week. The goal is to express your opinion and respond to feedback about your views.

## Take-Home Final

Each student will pick two out of three questions and write 500-1000 words in response to each. Learn from your op-eds. Be well-reasoned, concrete, and concise.

## Policies

**Academic Freedom:** This class will deal with subjects that are difficult, complex, and controversial. My goal as the instructor will be to introduce you to a diverse variety of theories and opinions about these topics. None of the topics we discuss have easy answers, if they did then they would not be controversial, nor a matter for public debate. You may have an opinion that differs from that of the material discussed, your fellow classmates, and even me. This is completely fine. Students are free to express their opinion, or not, depending entirely on their comfort level. Similarly, I expect students to respect the opinion and voice of others. At no time will your grade be based on your personal views. All views are welcome in my classroom, though we will be applying critical thinking to a diverse group of opinions and beliefs.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities or other concerns should contact me.

**Plagiarism:** Stanford code of academic conduct applies.

**Late Policy:** Because we frequently discuss assignments in class timeliness is important. Students will lose ten (10) percent of possible points for each 24 hour period the assignment is late.

## Topics & Schedule

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
9/21	<b>A (Very) Brief Racial History of the U.S.</b>
9/23	<b>A (Very) Brief Political History of the U.S.</b> Assignments: "This Illegal American Life" (60 min)
9/28	<b>A (Slightly) Brief Economic History of the U.S.; Structural-Functionalism</b> Assignments: "Inside Job" (108min); "Who Gets A Heart Transplant?"; "Some Principles of Stratification."(Davis & Moore 1945); "Some principles of stratification: a critical analysis." (Tumin 1953)
9/30	<b>Logic and Reasoning: Evaluating Public Debates</b> Watch a 24hr news channel (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX) for at least 1 hr on two separate days (2 hrs total); "Op-Ed Example" (2pgs; attached to this syllabus)
10/5	<b>Marxism and Communism</b> Assignments: "Parable of Shmoo" Comic Strip; "Communism: Promise and Reality, pt.1" (60 min); "Alienated Labor" "Manifesto of the Communist Party" <b>Op-Ed 1 Draft 1 Due</b>
10/7	<b>Topic Discussion</b> <b>Class:</b> "Raising Minimum Wage" (13pgs.); "Daily Show: Fast Food Minimum Wage (8min)"; "30 days on the Minimum Wage" (45min) <b>Race:</b> "Bangladesh Clothing Industry" (16pgs.); "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Fashion" (17min); "BBC's Panorama - Dying for a Bargain" (30min) <b>Politics:</b> "Exactly What Kind Of Socialist Is Bernie Sanders?" (4min); "Bernie Sanders, Seattle, Aug 8, 2015" (58min)
10/12	<b>Weber</b> Assignments: "Bureaucracy"; "Class, Status, Party" ; "Open and Closed Relationships"; "Economically Determined Power and Status Order" <b>Op-Ed 1 Draft 2 Due</b>
10/14	<b>Topic Discussion</b> <b>Class:</b> Weeden (2002) - Why Do Some Occupations Pay More than Others? Social Closure and Earnings Inequality in the United States (pages 1- 19; 37-41) (Coursework) <b>Race:</b> "Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part of Voting Rights Act"; "A Dream Undone"; "What's Left of the Voting Rights Act?"; "Texas ID Law Called Breach of Voting Rights Act"; "Why the Voting Rights Act Is Once Again Under Threat"; "Nine Years Ago, Republicans Favored Voting Rights. What Happened?"; "President Obama's Letter to the Editor"; Be familiar with Shelby County v. Holder; Daily Show "Voter ID Laws" (4min) (Coursework) <b>Politics:</b> "Gerrymandering" ( <a href="http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/gerrymandering">http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/gerrymandering</a> )

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**10/19 Neo-Institutionalism and World Society**

Assignments: World Society: The Writings of John Meyer (Krucken & Drori 1997) (Ch. 1 & 2)

*Op-Ed 1 Draft 3 Due*

**10/21 Topic Discussion**

**Class:** The New Closed Shop (pg 1-19, 28-39; read the footnotes too) (Coursework)

**Race:** :American Crime Gangs S07 - Nuestra Familia”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8bVIV8-h68>); “Outlaw Empires Nuestra Familia” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0OKD3G0iWY>); Rise and Fall of the “Nuestra Familia” (Beginning-Chapter 1; Pg 21-24; 29-30; 33; 35-41; 87-93; 103-107; 111-114);  
<http://abc7news.com/news/massive-san-jose-gang-bust-nets-24-arrests-/567405/>

**Politics:** “Human Rights in a Globalizing World” (pg 1-17, 30-31) (Coursework); “G.O.P. Struggling With Shifts on Gay Marriage”

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/27/us/politics/gop-strugglingwith-shifts-on-gay-marriage.html>); “Gay Marriage: State by State” (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/04/us/gay-marriagestate-by-state.html>); :Same-Sex Marriage: Landmark Decisions and Precedents” (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/26/us/samesexmarriage-landmarks.html>)

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**10/26 Social Movements: Guest Speaker – Jennifer Hill**

Assignments: Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (McAdam 2002) (Introduction) (Coursework)

*Op-Ed 2 Draft 1 Due*

**10/28 Topic Discussion**

**Class:** “CPnewsletter2006” (Coursework); “End of Class Politics” (pg 1-14) (Coursework)

**Race:** “1960s Klan Activism” (pg 1-8, 21-22) (Coursework); “Our Demand Is Simple: Stop Killing Us” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html?r=0>); “The Truth of ‘Black Lives Matter’”

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/04/opinion/the-truth-of-black-lives-matter.html>); “On Ferguson Unrest and Michael Brown Shooting” (<http://www.blackenterprise.com/news/jon-stewart-top-commentary-daily-show-finale-black-lives-matter/>); “FBI director: Rise in homicides in major cities could be linked to “reluctant” officers” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pXC5MKgOJ8>)

**Politics:** “‘Birther’ Boom” (<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/07/22/birther-boom/>); “Rick Perry and the ‘Birther’ Movement”

(<http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000001132943/rick-perry-and-the-birther-movement.html>); “Donald Trump - Obama Birth Certificate - Greatest Scam” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blckpwk1voQ>); “Racial Resentment at Its Root” (<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/04/21/barack-obama-and-the-psychology-of-the-birther-myth/racial-resentment-at-its-root/>)

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**11/2 Conflict Theory and Stereotyping**

Assignments: Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict (Olzak 1992) (Introduction); take the Implicit Bias Test  
(<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>)

*Op-Ed 2 Draft 2 Due*

**11/4 Topic Discussion**

**Class:** "Growth in the Residential Segregation of Families by Income, 1970-2009" (pg 3-7; 11-26) (Coursework); Fact-checking Romney's "47 percent" comment  
(<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/fact-checking-romneys-47-percent-comment/>)

**Race:** "Racial Bias in Arrest Rates" (You Tube <https://youtu.be/SczNctBYBQ4>)

**Politics:** "A Change of Heart or Change of Address? The Geographic Sorting of Whites' Attitudes towards Immigration" (pg 3-14; 30-33) (Coursework); "Where The 2016 Candidates Stand On Immigration, In One Chart"  
(<http://www.npr.org/2015/11/10/455359422/where-the-2016-candidates-stand-on-immigration-in-one-chart>)

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**11/9 Culture, Cultural Capital, and Social Networks**

Assignments: Making Sense of Culture (Patterson 2014) (Coursework)

*Op-Ed 2 Draft 3 Due*

**11/11 Topic Discussion**

**Class:** "Managing Elites" (Coursework)

**Race:** "Anything but Heavy Metal" (pg 1-6, 8-15) (Coursework)

**Politics:** "What's the Matter with What's the Matter with Kansas" (Coursework); "Political Polarization and Media Habits" (Coursework)

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**11/16 Identity and Group Processes**

Assignments: Social Psychology of Identities (Howard 2000) (Coursework)

*Op-Ed 3 Draft 1 Due*

**11/18 Topic Discussion**

**Class:** "My Nanny Was a Terrible Snob" (Coursework)

**Race:** "How Fluid Is Racial Identity?"  
(<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity>); "Did Rachel Dolezal Commit Racial Fraud"  
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/us/rachel-dolezal-nbc-today-show.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&r=0>)

**Politics:** "The Political Typology, Identity and Attitudes" ([http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/section-1-the-political-typology-identity-and-attitudes/?utm\\_expid=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-Koplg.0&utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com](http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/section-1-the-political-typology-identity-and-attitudes/?utm_expid=53098246-2.Lly4CFSVQG2lphsg-Koplg.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com)); "Political Typology Quiz" (<http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/>)

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**11/23** *No Class – Thanksgiving Break*

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**11/30** Op-Ed Presentations  
***Op-Ed 3 Draft 2 Due***

**12/2** Op-Ed Presentations

**12/9** *No Class – Finals Week*  
***Op-Ed 3 Draft 3 Due***  
***Final Exam Due***

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## Op-Ed Example:

On August 5, 2013, the Palo Alto City Council passed the Vehicle Habitation Ordinance (VHO), which banned “living”, defined as sleeping and eating, in your car. The measure passed, against much community opposition, in response to complaints by residents of the small neighborhood surrounding the Cubberly Community Center, a library and recreational facility that has been home to approximately 30 homeless Palo Alto residents for years, after the City actively invited homeless residents to park their vehicles and live in the ‘safe space’ the Center offered. The Center also had showers and restrooms open all day and a wide range of services available. Many of the unhoused in Palo Alto took the City up on its offer and began living in parked cars behind Cubberley or on benches throughout the grounds.

Many homeless residents of Palo Alto work within the city, but are simply unable to afford that astronomical cost of housing within the Bay Area, particularly on a part-time or minimum-wage income. Many have unusable or unregistered cars, unable to afford costly repairs, smog checks, registration fees, and insurance. Those with working cars must live near their jobs, since the rising price of gas precludes commuting from the (only slightly) less expensive East Bay.

Most of the Palo Alto residents opposed to the ban argued that denying people the right to live in their cars will increase the dangers of being homeless, because sleeping on the street increases the risk of robbery, assault, rape, and other serious harms. Many residents did not realize, though, that the City will enforce this ordinance as a misdemeanor, potentially subjecting those cited to serious fines and up to six months in jail. Effectively, the law criminalizes homelessness in Palo Alto.

While the VHO has gotten some community attention, it will not be enforced for several months. In contrast, there has been almost no attention paid to the fact that, starting THIS

THURSDAY, Cubberley and a lengthy list of other facilities will be closed every night at 10:30 p.m. Between that time and sunrise, homeless residents will be charged with a crime if they are found on the Center's grounds, including the parking lots. Once the Cubberley closure is enforced on Thursday, these cars will be subject to towing and impound. In other words, in two days, the homeless residents of Cubberley will have to leave, in order to avoid arrest, and some will be forced to abandon the only home, resource, and safety they have left.

Santa Clara County is one of the ten richest counties in the United States. Palo Alto, which houses many of Stanford's students and professors, is also one of the most highly-educated and highly liberal cities in the nation, surrounded by one of the most liberal states in the Union. How did this happen? How did such a prosperous and liberal area effectively criminalize poverty? Many of the residents of Palo Alto acknowledge that the costs of living in the city are unreasonable, and that the lack of affordable housing is unacceptable. Nonetheless, after the initial outcry died down, there was virtually no community resistance to the City's proposal to begin locking up the poorest among us.

Words: 529